

# OLD UNCLE MOSE

**W**HENEVER I see Uncle Mose Duncan I marvel at his peace of mind, at his faith in his Maker, at his amazing memory. Uncle Mose is the oldest person I know, one of the poorest in this world's goods, one of the strongest, healthiest and happiest.

He says he was 39 years old when he went with his white master to war in 1861. Maybe he was, for the oldest citizens here agree that when they were children, Uncle Mose looked as old as he does now. But for all his years his black, velvety skin is unlined, and hardly a thread of white shows in his thick shock of wool.

When the war was over and he was a free man he took up well digging for a living while his younger brother, Sam, ran for the State Senate and defeated his opponent, a prominent white man, by a large majority.

Uncle Mose thinks Sam made a bad mistake when he took up with carpet baggers and former slaves who were drunk with freedom, but he tells with pride how Sam was offered a fine plantation to cast his vote for a measure that threatened hardship for the white people, and refused because he had white friends at home.

This is true. When Sam's term in office ended somewhat abruptly and he came home he was given title to a small piece of land. The rest of his life he lived in a cabin at the top of the steep, broken hillside and plowed his brindle ox, trying to kill the joint grass in patches of cotton and corn that struggled for life between rain-washed gullies.

Sam liked to laugh over some of his experiences in the State Capitol at Columbia, but the only material things he had left to show for them were his Prince Albert coat and black derby hat. He wore them to church and to the village every Saturday during the 50 years he lived afterward, and when death took his soul to the green fields of Eden his old body wore them to its grave.

Everybody called Sam "Senator," and everybody respected him, for he was honest, industrious, sober and courteous, a good citizen so long as life lasted.

He and Uncle Mose learned to read and write when they were boys, along with children of their white master. Today Uncle Mose can repeat the multiplication table from twice-two-are-four up to the twelve-times-a-hundred so glibly his thick loose lips move like a shuttle in a loom between his sparse black mustache and beard.

He can start with b-a, ba, b-e be, b-i bi and recite the whole old blue-black speller without halting. He can name without hesitation every President and Vice President from George Washington to Hoover, tell where they came from, how long they served.

He lives alone in a tiny cabin, does his own cooking and housekeeping. The younger Negroes laugh at him, "make sport," as he calls it, when he tries to set them right, but it rarely disturbs him. When he wants a sympathetic listener or a change of food he visits some of his white neighbors.

His legs are short, his body heavy, his feet bare, but he can "take his foot in his hand" and walk five miles or ten and arrive without a sign of fatigue.

He sits patiently on the back door step and waits until the spirit moves one of the servants to announce him. They resent him and he knows it. He sighs over their lack of manners and says times have changed since he was young. The cook complains that he eats too much—as much as three men could hold. Uncle Mose answers that he has lived as long as three men, done as much work, seen as much, and three times as much food is his due. Some of the other servants hold that he wears them out, telling them how to act. Uncle Mose says he despises unmannerable people worse than anything in the world, and reminds them that once God sent bears to eat up children who made sport of a wise old man. They had better be careful.

His old features are built so they cannot register sorrow. The only sign he gives of worry is shaking his head. Lately I saw his head shaking so earnestly I asked what was wrong. Uncle Mose said sorrowfully that Satan would get all his people if they did not change their ways. They had forgotten God, thought only of pleasuring themselves, dressing up, acting big doings. Most of them were bad as Belshazzar ever was. Only last Sunday—it was convention Sunday, too, and the church was so crowded with delegates some had to stand outside in the yard—the deacons let a man fetch a barrel of corn liquor and sell it to delegates and members. They got drunk, had a fight, the sheriff came all the way from town and carried two truck loads to jail. What did Jesus think of that?

If the people did not quit their doings, God would lose patience and send a curse on them worse than the curse he put on Ham. Black people are under Ham's curse to this day. God has them marked. They had better watch out what they do.

Ham was a lot like the young people now. God let him go in the ark and be saved because Noah, his daddy, was a good Christian man. The angel sealed the ark up and took the key off. Rain came, flooded the rivers, covered the land, drowned everything in the world. The ark rode the waters until the sun came out. After that little dove came back with an olive branch in his bill the angel unlocked the ark and came in. He had a talk with Noah and told him the land was full of dead folks. Noah would have to bury every one six feet deep, for the living cannot stay among the dead.

It was a big work. Noah got so down in the heart he went back in the pantry room and drank up all the sacrament wine he had on board. It was old wine and mighty strong. He got drunk and lay down on the floor. His wife tried to make him get up but he rolled and carried on until his breeches came off. Ham laughed. That was wrong. Ham ought to have



Painted for The Star's Sunday Magazine by Lu Kimmel.

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By Julia Peterkin

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had respect for his daddy. One of the other boys got a sheet and covered Noah up.

When the angel told God about it, God sent the angel back to get Ham and take him off to a far country where the hot sun was so strong it turned him black. All Ham's children and grandchildren, all his people are black to this day. Noah was not white or black, but the color of the ground, same like Adam and Eve.

Ham's brothers helped Noah bury the dead and God gave them good places to live, but the boy who covered Noah with the sheet got the best place of all. He lived where it was cool and shady and his children and grandchildren got whiter and whiter, for the land was rich and plenty of fruit grew on the trees. All they had to cook was meat.

Before long his family multiplied until they needed more land. Plenty of land was there, but they wanted good level fields. Christopher Columbus was a young widow man then and full of spirit. He saw the need, so he made a boat from a picture of Noah's ark. Building the boat took all his money and he had to have some to pay his sailors.

All the countries around him were under king and queen rule. He went to the kings to get help, but they were busy, so he went to the Queens, Elizabeth in England, and Jeanna and Catherine. They would not give him a cent. Isabel in Spain liked Columbus and sold her jewelry to raise a thousand dollars for him.

Columbus fixed up two other ships and sailed off. He sailed and sailed until he came to an island named Cuba, 700 miles long and two

miles wide. From there he went to Florida and scoured the country until he reached St. Augustine, which is the oldest town in the world.

Indians were in this country then, but people came over by the millions and ran the Indians off and took the land for themselves. All these people were put under the King and Queen law. It's a hard law, too. That was a hundred years before George Washington was born.

Washington was born in Virginia and he was a smart man. He fought England on the fourth of March and whipped them on the twelfth of July, got his people from under the King and Queen law. They were so glad they made a merry day for him, and had a big barbeque and elected him President and called the barbeque grounds Washington, after him.

From then on everybody got on fine until Abraham Lincoln grew up. Lincoln was born in Kentucky in a log cabin. He was a poor white-trash boy and had to work all day to get money to go to school at night. After he learned to read and write he studied how to be a lawyer, a Congressman, a Senator, he even studied how to be President. When he learned all he could he went to Tennessee and was elected high sheriff. Later in Springfield he was elected to the high Senate.

The people up there were not bred people like those in the South. They did field work and worked at all kinds of trades. They were jealous hearted of the people in the South, who were bred and rich, and they asked Lincoln to run for President and make the South people get out and work.

When the South heard that they called out Jefferson Davis and told him something had to be done about it. They could not live in a country with a man like Lincoln as President. Davis came from a high class and never did run with common folks. He went to Richmond and built a capital and manufactured plenty of money. A black field hand in the South could make as much as four hundred dollars in three months in those days. Hard times seemed gone for good. Maybe people pleased so much they forgot to pray. Anyway, the North people got vexed than ever and called out Lincoln.

Lincoln said the best way was to fight it out, whoever was whipped would lose all the money. He rounded up all the white trash and sent them South. They fought the South four years. Burned the houses, stole the silver, carried off the horses and freed the slaves. They had plenty of their own money but it was no good to buy things. It was a sad time. The South has not gotten straight to this day. Money has been scarce ever since.

How about slavery, Uncle Moses, I suggested; Weren't the slaves glad to be free?

Not me, Miss. I never dug a well in my life until after freedom. I was de pantry boy, wid plenty to eat, plenty to drink, not a lash on my back lessen I forgot my manners and took too much after de gentlemen had finished drinkin' dey drams.

He says the North started slavery. They went to Africa and brought shiploads of black people from the land where God put Ham. The weather was too cold, the slaves died like flies. Those that were left were sent South and sold. The North people did all that. Thank God they did. Cold weather is a hard thing in this world. Ham's children had a bad enough curse on them already, without being frozen to death. Ham did a terrible thing when he laughed at his pa. God says children must honor their parents and God will bear down on anybody right today for disrespect to old folks. Satan is to blame. Satan wants hell piled up with people.

It is a pity God let Satan loose on the world, Uncle Mose, I put in.

It does look so, but God never aimed to do it. A long time ago before the world was made God sat up by himself in the middle of the air. He was the Father, Son and Holy Ghost all in one, but He got lonesome with nobody to talk to, so He built a fine heaven, made a gold throne to sit on, and next to it He put a gold chair and made an angel named Lucifer to sit beside Him and talk. Before long God made the earth and people just for something to do, and Lucifer helped him smart as could be.

Lucifer was the star of heaven, for Jesus was not born then, but he got uppity and sassy. God kicked him clean out of heaven into the middle of the earth. Lucifer fell so fast his wings caught fire and burnt off.

That same fire started hell, and it is seven times hotter than fire on earth. Before the people on earth could use it, God made an angel take a piece and swim it through seven rivers to cool it down enough to cook with.

When Lucifer left heaven God changed his name to Satan, but He could not make him stand still and behave. Every time God looked off Satan slipped up to the top of the earth and started wars and deviltry. He is at it strong as ever, yes, Lord.

President Hoover better pray. He better break his knee joints regular or Satan will wipe this country clean off the earth. Satan is the very one started all these airplanes. The Bible says people must keep out of the elements, says it plain as day.

It is a pity God let the Republicans multiply so fast. Now since they rule the land, look at the price of cotton, look at the bad liquor, look how everything is changed. Even the sun does not shine so bright and the skies are not near so blue. No Lord, times have changed.

But wait. Things might get better. No telling. God will never turn His face clean away from high class, bred people. It would be no surprise if the South would start manufacturing money again like they used to. Plenty of smart men are left here yet. Plenty they got better sense than to make airplanes and things to kill they-selves. They make cotton to clothe the people and corn to feed them and raise hogs and cattle.

That's the way to live. The Republicans will soon thin themselves out. It will be a blessing, too. We'll have a good country to live in then. Plenty of money, plenty to wear, plenty to eat. Some of these days we'll tell hard times good by if we don't forget God and Jesus.

## Waste "Gas" Now Saved

ENOUGH natural gasoline, which formerly went to waste, was produced last year to drive a "15-mile-to-the-gallon automobile" more than 30,000,000,000 miles. At that, production was below that of 1929.

The natural gasoline comes from two sources, the primary source being from the oil wells during the production and processing of crude oils. The secondary source is from natural gas wells. Last year's production was nearly two and a quarter billion gallons, dropping off somewhat from the previous year due to the decline in production of crude oils. The greater demand for natural gas, however, because of the construction of the huge pipe lines from the Texas Panhandle, increased this source of supply and overcome to a large extent the loss from the curtailing of petroleum production.

The United States produces about 91 per cent of the world's supply of natural gasoline, but the other producing countries are showing gains every year.

## Oil Sales, \$17,000,000

IT required 970 filling stations to supply the wants of the motorists of Maryland last year, these stations doing a total business of more than \$17,000,000.



Sam wore his Prince Albert coat and black derby hat to church and to the village for 50 years.